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IN
GOD'S
GARDEN





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IN
GOD'S GARDEN

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MEDITATIONS ON
SELF-DEVELOPMENT

BY

LUCY McDOWELL MILBURN

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*Upon my face I fall,
As on the Sacred Name I call.
O Father in heaven,
Thou alone knowest me.
I Thy sinful child,
Passing through the desert wild,
Come to Thee
To make me free.
Thou only, Thou alone
Understandest Thine own.
Thou sent the Holy One,
Who could atone;
One to show the way,
One Who the debt did pay!—
Then why do we delay
To claim our own?*

Planting Perennials

In God's garden all His children
should blossom and bear fruit.

OUR bodies are plots of ground in the garden of God, portions of Mother Earth allotted us for cultivation. Are we doing the most with our bodies? Are we developing them outside and inside? The body should be held well, moved rhythmically and made as beautiful as possible. Every care should be taken of this precious plot of ground in order that our tree of life may blossom and bear fruit.

As flowers without roots wither fast, so beauty only of the flesh soon goes. A top dressing for the soil is all very well for small flowers, but for hardy plants, for trees or flowering perennials, we must needs dig deep, turn up all the old roots; get rid of that which cumbers the soil. Throw out the stones, break up the clods and let air and light come in to regenerate.

We should begin to dig in the heart. This is the richest spot in all our garden, the one most

necessary to cultivate. If it is in a good state it can be used to fertilize all the rest of the ground.

Digging may not go deep enough; we may need plowing. The glebe in the heart may be very stubborn, or the stubble standing in the way. There may be bitter or even rotten roots in the heart which choke the growth of the good. This tends to discouragement, but it should not. All these things of the past may be placed beneath the earth and will in time help to enrich the earth. Only plow deep enough; turn the earth over the old roots; pound down the clods; water well the field with fervent prayer; then begin to plant the seeds.

If the heart is right, that is a great gain. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" is poetry badly translated. No one thinks in his heart—we can only think in our heads. A better reading of the text would be, As a man thinks and as he feels in his heart, so is he. If we have a good feeling towards God and man and keep on cultivating this good feeling, keeping self in the background, we shall soon begin to grow. Often-

times the higher self in man is asleep so that he is ruled by the lower self and leads a life of self-indulgence. Such lives are never happy, for the birds do not sing in a garden where there is nothing for them to feed upon.

Whether we are leading lives of luxury or lives of labor, if we are dissatisfied it is well to pray for the plowman to come. The coulter may hurt. If it drives very deep it is sure to turn up some rubbish, probably some stones. These must be gotten rid of, if in the heart they stop the circulation. It may not amount to hardness of heart, only stones for stumbling, irresolution, doubt, fear, something that impedes progress. Throw them out, even if they seem precious to the eyes. Sweep up all the rubbish, even if in so doing it takes away objects long treasured,—perchance all our bank account. Clean up; begin anew. Having thrown out all the stones for stumbling; having buried all bitterness, wrath, ill will and uncharitableness, then plant firmly, and plant the best.

First, the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruit makes us realize what we are, why we are here, and

what our work is; which furnishes us with food for all our days here and hereafter; we should cultivate to the largest extent. An English poet has wisely said, "Knowledge is material for wisdom to build with."

The Tree of Help for Humanity has a wonderful blossom; its perfume will last beyond our earth's days. When this tree flowers in our garden it makes the face glow with its beauty.

The Tree of Universal Peace is a very small, short, bushy shrub, but its fruit is so nourishing. One should cultivate this to a large extent and scatter its seeds broadcast.

With these three trees in good condition the birds will come to nest in our garden. There will be singing for hours each day, and lovely things we never knew we had planted will spring up and blossom and bear fruit.

There is a tree that God plants in every human heart when the ground is made ready by us. It stands in the centre of our plot of ground. If it is not growing and flourishing it is because we have not cleared out the rubbish or that we

have allowed weeds to choke it or have neglected to water it.

This is the Tree of Life, whose leaves give healing to the nations.* It is worth caring for. It bears the fruit of continued existence.

* Rev. xxii, 2.

The Garden Wall

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

IT MAY be that our mantle of clay is too thin, that we are hurt by the winds of ill will or that people press too close and the fragile soul suffers thereby. Oftentimes our environment is uncongenial. Even if this happens to be the best, yet the thought of those at a distance who dislike or misunderstand us may effect us unpleasantly. It may be that we must come in contact with a number of people who quite unconsciously are infringing upon our territory. If we feel ill at ease with those near us, yet know our thought is kindly towards all; if it is our province to go much into the world and the crowd disagrees with us so that we weary physically or tire mentally from having too many people about us; then it is of importance to build a wall around our garden—a protective outer wall.

Many persons seem to be eternally shut in.

They have a pinched look, even though they are constantly doing things, they never seem to accomplish anything very worth while, or to take much pleasure in their work. They are not hiding behind a wall, they are just huddling themselves together on one or another mound of their plot of ground; usually they have not begun to dig; they never have explored the region of the heart. They sit on their stomachs and, like the leaves that turn brown in August, they dry up in middle age. Then there are persons who hop around from one mound to another, never cultivating any of their talents, never sowing any good seed. They run hither and thither after this or that new cult or fad, asking for the latest style and the last trashy novel. If by any chance these persons get to their hearts they may be very kind, but with the best of intentions they do many mistaken charities and constantly worry those about them by their scatterbrain way of proceeding. The leaves of their tree are red, but are blown about by every wind. We need not commiserate those who hop about as we should do those who are hud-

dling themselves together on one mound, for they will get somewhere through their hearts, those red leaves flying around the lawn may bring pleasure to some one, while the dried brown ones must just crumble and go back to earth again.

To neither of these classes of persons will the garden wall appeal: the selfish person does not need it; the scatterbrained one could not build it. This protective outer wall is for those whose garden is planted; who are living the life we are bidden to live; that of going into all the world with our banner of life, taking part of the refreshment we have gained from our green fields to others whose grain has not yet bladed.

Yes, we must go out, but may we not choose the time and the place so as not to waste the precious oil of our lamp of life?

Having enlarged the boundaries of the heart to the utmost, so that our garden is fully enriched; having plowed and planted and seen the green springing things, the sight of which sends a thrill through us, a pulsation of pleasure as of the spring arriving; now, instead of suffering our

tender herbs to be rudely shaken or trampled on, we needs must build a wall around our plot of ground, our earth body. It may be that our trees are bearing fruit before we feel the necessity for this wall. These precious trees may break down with the burden of their fruit if not protected. We may have been too generous in giving of our time and strength, too anxious to feed the world. So rather than see our trees broken, our fruit fallen ere ripe, we shall endeavor to protect it.

Most good things come from within. We have, oh, so much more inside than we know of, such inexhaustible treasure when we have opened the door of the kingdom of heaven in our hearts. Yet outside as well as inside are valuable possessions, some of which we have not so much as dreamed of. It is from something outside of ourselves, outside of our earth bodies, that the garden wall must be built. The impulse to use this material, the thought necessary for building of our wall comes from within. Now what is the material we are to use and how are we to obtain it?

We are surrounded by an intangible substance which we have named ether. It is invisible to most persons, but whether we see it or not we may learn to use it. A blind man can learn to swim if he uses his breath and his limbs aright. Nothing can be accomplished without some effort. It is by strain and stress that we grow. The etheric atmosphere is all about us. It is ours for the taking; we may draw it more closely around us by a slight action of the will.

To breathe deeply and rhythmically a certain movement of the body is necessary. Control of the diaphragm or of the intercostal muscles, an expansion or contraction of the chest. Just as we breathe in the air which we do not see, but which we may drink deeply of by a slight action of the will, so we may wrap the ether about us by willing it.

To draw the elastic ether to us and hold it around us, no action of the physical form is required. A good time to begin gathering it is when walking alone out of doors, when lying in a hammock or sitting in the open. We can build the wall faster outside in the fresh air, but

when this is not convenient, it can be done in your own room at any hour of the day or night, sitting, standing or lying down.

In starting to build this protective outer covering, this garden wall, first think of the enveloping ether. It is like a great white cloud, though more attenuated than any cloud we see. Try to feel it about you. Though you cannot see it with the outer eye, you may imagine it with the inner eye; then by a strong action of the will pull on it as you would pull back on an oar. The ether, like other life forces, comes in waves. To have it, to keep it, to use it, we must feel the rhythm of it. Then just as we would lie back on an oar or float on water, by holding ourselves very still inside and bringing the mind to bear on this enveloping substance we may attract more of it to us. If we love it we surely shall, for love is the great cementing force in nature.

When left alone on Mt. Caucasus, to keep his uncoveted watch o'er the earth and the sea, Prometheus calls upon the powers of nature. He distinguishes between air and ether, calling

the latter holy. Again when the Titan feels he is a loser in his battle with the gods, not only does he beg mother earth to behold how he suffers, but he speaks again to the ether,* declaring it to be the light-bringer.

If we desire to be enfolded in this ether so that it will form the protective outer wall, we should practise for a few moments each day the exercise of "rowing in ether," then draw it closely to us and wrap enough of it about us until we feel the invisible veil is thick enough to be as a wall to our garden. We hold it by being conscious it is there, that it is ours. Our thought gathers it while our love cements it. We may have just as much as we need and without price. And now we begin to perceive that none of the very precious things can be purchased with money. The process of making this etheric body, envelope, veil, or wall, is so much easier and swifter than that of weaving the physical

* We are accustomed to think of the ether as a medium for the waves of light, heat, and sound as a nineteenth century discovery. Yet the Attic bard of the fifth century, B.C., personifies ether and speaks of it as bringing the light.

body, a person of average will power may complete it in three years. After it is built it requires very little thought to keep it always in repair; though a time may come when we shall wish to enlarge it.*

Long, long before the wall is finished, if our thought about it is simple willing it with faith, we will begin to feel the support of this substance and realize the seclusion that may be ours even in a crowd. It helps us to be in the world and yet not of it, to do our work and come in contact with much that would otherwise fatigue us to the point of illness. This etheric substance is like a great umbilical cord binding us to our Heavenly Parent; through it we are gradually brought nearer to the heart-beats of the Creator and receive the strength, confidence and protection we need.

* Some writers confuse the etheric wrap with the astral body, hence, teach differently respecting it. It is a mistake to think that it only is removed when the spirit leaves the body. It may be moved at will.

The Garden Hat

Behold when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by.

THERE are those who do not need to build a garden wall; either they have one naturally or their physical frame is such that it shields them so that other people do not press too close. They feel no loss of strength in the crowded ways of life. They may—often do—gain more than they lose from those about them.

Very many persons have as yet nothing growing in their gardens,—no fields of tender grain; no trees bearing fruit; hence, no necessity for a wall; so the thought of it means nothing to them. They walk in their gardens pleased with the stone and clay. They feel no need of plowing their field. Planting time has not come for them. Yet even these persons may need a garden hat. Indeed, they need it more than the one who has green fields and shade trees, for the sun's energy beating on the naked earth reflects back little

light but makes oftentimes excessive heat which the head feels first.

Noise, worry, too strenuous thinking, tire the head. It may be we are too constantly in the limelight of life, whether from one reason or another, if the head suffers, it is well to have a garden hat or cap that you may put on or take off at will. It is sometimes more difficult to make this hat and fit it on than even to build our wall, but it does not take so long a time,—from three to six months usually. We may borrow Hermes' Cap as Perseus did when starting on his arduous journey. This cap has wings and tends to make our thought fly faster and does not do much to rest a tired head. If we are to have a hat to help us pass through the noise and turmoil of town life, or to restore vigor to the overtaxed brain by resting our weary heads and shielding us from the conflicting forces about us, let us weave it ourselves, that it may fit us comfortably. First we may choose the color. Not white, that reflects too much light; nor black, for that absorbs all the light. We know how very unhealthy it is to wear black,

especially for children, as none of the actinic rays of the sun can penetrate black, and sunlight is necessary for growth.

If we wish to cultivate a good head of hair it is well to go bareheaded when the weather is not too cold or the sun too strong. Children should go bareheaded most of the time. It is not a covering for the physical head we are going to make but an astral hat—one to shelter us from noise, one to quiet and rest the weary brain.

It is by thought that we manufacture this hat, yet it will be real, for thought is creative. That which we desire to make by our thought we first imagine, then will. Let us then image a hat. It may be of any color—preferably of brown or dark red or light green (dark green induces thought, but light green rests the mind). Our hat should be of a soft substance, not too heavy, hence, with trimming, we should be able to put it on at will and draw it down slowly and easily as we would turn an earthen flower pot over a newly set out plant. We should not even in thought use a flower pot for our heads, it is

far too heavy and too hard. The suggestion is merely for the way of putting on the cap or hat. Having decided the color and the texture and ordered it on, we should settle it comfortably on the head, then if desired draw it down to shield the eyes from glare. Now, noise and excessive light being removed, we may, if we desire absolute rest, direct the current of thought away from the tired brain by steadily drawing down on the left side and in thought rest all our problems, all our cares, all our joys, in the heart. When we have by a strong action of the will guided the current down to the heart, then by another action of the will stop thinking, as nearly as possible—just feel satisfied. We can will ourselves to feel satisfied just as well as to permit ourselves to feel dissatisfied. Just know that all is right because it is.

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

The Shady Bower

“The divinity has not a place more desired
than the human heart.”

EVERY garden should have a place for shelter and for rest. Whether it be a natural seat made by an old grape vine which has tried to climb, first one way and then another, clinging to a tree on this side or on that; turning itself about for a better hold upon a branch; or whether there is a bench or a stone under a shady tree or a little rustic hut overgrown by vines, where perchance the humming-birds come to nest and the bees sip their sweets. Here in this imaginary bower we may rest from the glare of life, be shaded from the noon-day heat of duties that crowd. Here we may just talk with God and no other. Here our souls may commune at will with the Great Unseen. If we prepare the place so that it is sweet and clean as we should wish it for an honored guest and there is room for someone else besides ourselves, all we need to do is to invite the King and he will come in and will sit

down and sup with us.* If he does not come when asked it may be that there is some obstruction in the path,† some rubbish stands before the door or dead stuff fills the seat whereon the guest should sit. From this sacramental spot we should banish everything but Love. No doubt must obstruct the path ; no prejudice intrude ; no distrust sit on the bench ; no grief lie at the door. If all within quiescent is, nothing there but love, Behold, thy King cometh ! We may rest in the assurance that we are entertaining God. We may talk with Him in this quiet retreat, for every child has a right to speak to his Creator direct, and when he does it will not be long before he finds his Shady Bower the most delightful spot in all his garden, a place within himself where he may retire for rest and for refreshment.

*St. John xiv, 23.

† St. Mathew iii, 3.

The Jars

AT THE entrance of that path in our garden which leads up to the Shady Bower we may place two jars to indicate the gateway. Sometimes we see columns; these are ornamental, but the column is closed at the top while the jar is open and symbolizes the receptive spirit. These jars should be large and filled with fresh water ready to use for watering the plants. This will speak to us of the water of life of which we are bidden to partake freely.

We should never be satisfied with a small quantity of anything eternal. All things are ours, and there is such an abundance of grace which we may have for the asking. There is an infinite supply of light and life waiting to come in. We need only have the best. Our Father desires us to have all perfect things. How are we to get our share of the eternal goods? We are bidden to empty out the jars and to fill them with fresh water.

Empty out the jars! Get rid of old-time prej-

udices, of doubts, of distrust, of despondency, of apathy, of indifference, of any and everything that clogs the way or that makes for impurity. Having emptied the jars we shall put into them new desires, frank expression, purity of purpose, strong faith, loving kindness. Our part is to keep the jars clean and filled with fresh water—the Master will convert the water into wine.

We may find it difficult to empty our jars. They may seem to be empty, yet little things still cling to the sides. A dark crustation may be at the bottom, hardened by time and not easily removed.

Probably we have never cast all our cares on Him, remembering that He careth for us. The weighty matters of life, the burdens we know are too great; our grosser sins; our deeper perplexities, we take to God, but oftentimes forget that we must also go to God with the little cares.

Some people only pray when in great need. Sailors who never think of prayer in fair weather, it is said, will fall on their knees as soon as a storm strikes the ship. In an earthquake everyone prays. But why wait for stress and storm;

why not go to God on fair days when we are blessed as well as on dark days when we are chastened? When downcast and troubled, when a mental or spiritual storm sweeps over us, we naturally turn to a Higher Power; but in prosperous and in peaceful, happy times we are prone to forget God. Before our jars can be entirely empty we must cast all our cares, all our worries, all our perplexities, all our burdens, on Him who alone understands us and who is ever ready to pour blessing and healing on us and give us wine instead of water when the place is made ready.

In very ancient days there lived a sage who left a lay of great worth and beauty, wherein we read words very like those familiar ones of St. Peter, only fuller. In the Bhagavad Gita we read: "Casting off with thy mind all works upon me"; and again, "If thou hast thy thought on me, thou shalt by my Grace pass over all hard ways; but if from thought of the I thou hearken not, thou shalt be lost." The Hindoo poet puts it very clearly. If we are full of self, if the thought of the I takes the place of the thought of God;

if we are selfish and worldly-minded and permit the care of earth things to clog our minds so that we cannot hear the inner voice, we shall not be saved by its warnings. But if our thought is ever on the highest, if we are constantly casting off, with the mind, everything that hinders us on the path; if we are emptying out the jars; we shall, by the aid of grace, pass over all hard places. It is the thought of the I that makes all the dark crustations on the inside of our jars. This is one of the most difficult things to empty out.

There has been a good deal of misunderstanding about the esoteric teaching of the East regarding action. Some superficial students of the ancient wisdom seem to read into these teachings that it is advisable to always be in a state of passivity: that to do nothing but meditate is the highest way. This very sentence, "Casting off with thy mind all works upon me," has been used as evidence that works are not acceptable to God. Let us look a little farther into the teaching of the Hindoo seer as given in that wonderful dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and the Lord.

In lesson the third we find Arjuna facing the same difficulty that besets us when told that works are not the highest way. Speaking to his heavenly visitor the warrior says: "If thou deemest understanding more excellent than works, O Troubler of the Folk, then wherefore dost thou engage me in a grim work, O Long-Haired One? Thou confoundest my understanding with seeming tangled utterance; tell me surely the one thing whereby I shall win to bliss." The answer which Krishna gives is long, in part this: "Without undertaking works no man may possess worklessness, nor can he come to adeptship by mere casting off of works." . . . "Do thy ordained work; for work is more excellent than no work, even the substance of thy body can not be won from no work."

After reading this answer of the Krishna, how do we reconcile the command to cast all our works on Him. The exact wording is "Casting off with thy mind all works upon me," which cannot mean to stop working, for in the same dialogue we read, "To cease from action is action." Neither can it mean that we are not to think

about our work and so do it carelessly. Assuredly it means that we are to do what our hands find to do well and willingly, but that we are not to work for selfish ends, not to let the thought of the I get in the way of our progress. Work done only to benefit self does get in the way of progress. We must work for the uplift of humanity, for the betterment of the world without even a desire for any reward or appreciation or advancement of self. We are bidden to work without thought of fruit of works, else the work is of none effect upon us; but if we surrender all fruit of our work unto the Lord we shall have our reward in advancement of our spirit.

These teachings of the sage of India so long, long ago remind us of the precepts of the Lord Jesus when he bids us to let our light shine, not so that our good works will make us rich or famous, but that they shall glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Krishna promises his faithful servant Arjuna that if he does surrender all fruit of works, if he has no selfish motive of gain to himself by what he is doing, then inspiration and peace will be his.

Truth is one and the same in all times, in every clime. The great teachers all see the same light,* but each one puts it in a way he deems best adapted to the people with whom he is thrown. We who are blessed by living in a day when the words of wisdom of many lands are brought to us in our own language, may, if we will, easily find the utterance best suited to our need, and instead of wrangling over seeming differences in religious creeds, seek out the simple wholesome teachings that accord. Lights all pointing to the same sign-post.

The ability to cull these flowers from other lands as well as our own, to see the lights from over the sea, will be ours when we have obeyed the behest to empty out the jars. When we are rid of that most disturbing, limiting thought, the thought of the I—when we are working without any selfish motive—the Master, whose command we have heeded to put fresh water (purity of intention) into our jars, will come and turn the water into wine ; will, when our surrender to His will is complete, and our works all

* St. John i, 9.

done with right intent, give us inspiration, exhilaration,—yea, exultation of spirit, which is real joy.

Things to be emptied out: *Things to be put in:*

Apathy	Calmness
Anger	Confidence
Hate	Courage
Carelessness	Kindness
Indifference	Justice
Distrust	Faith
Discontent	Sympathy
Dissipation	Truth
Despondency	Gentleness
Insincerity	Goodness
Infidelity	Temperance
Injustice	Reverence
Obstinacy	Purity
Irreverence	Poise
Suspicion	Peace
Worry	Loyalty
Prejudice	Love

The Torch

“ Wipe not a seat with a torch.”

IT MAY be we have little leisure in life, that the time we may sit in the shady nook of the garden is very limited; that we rarely or never can take a long walk alone. Our place may be in the procession, needs be we must run until we grow weary and faint with heavy burdens and feel inclined to drop our torch or use it for baser ends than we know is the highest. We cannot always be running in the procession, nor forever holding the torch high enough to lighten the path for others. If we happen to be poet, preacher, or teacher, we shall desire to do so and may hope to keep the blaze bright until the time comes to pass it on to other runners in the race, so that our message may not fail and that the best may win.

All down the ages there have been great torch bearers, some whose names are blazoned on the very air; some who perchance worked as hard as those fortunate ones, yet whose names are

unknown to us. Whether their names are recorded here or not matters little, for they are engraven in the Book of Life. Those souls whose lamps have burned brightly and been held high still hold their torches, even though they have gone beyond mortal vision.

There have always been and always will be children of Prometheus, who like that Titan god, steal the fire from heaven and are chained to the rocks by necessity, that grim goddess who is even higher than the three-fold fates. When we see ourselves and our brother man chained to the rocks of Time we blame inexorable Fate. But why blame anything but self? If we have misused or debased our heavenly fire, it is but just that we should suffer. Among the symbols of Pythagoras we find this: "Do not wipe a seat with a torch." Like all of the great philosopher's teachings, this precept is terse and telling. A seat is something earthy, it belongs to our animal nature.

When we need rest or recreation a seat is good, it has its use just as the body has. The Samian sage takes it for a symbol of the body. Should

we wipe a seat with a torch, we would smut it, possibly burn it, certainly not do it any good, and probably extinguish the torch. In consequence of its participation in fire the torch is a symbol for philosophy, for light, for life. By making a wrong use of it we not only defile the torch but run the risk of losing its light.

Prometheus was punished for stealing the heavenly fire. He turned his torch downward instead of upward. This myth of the Titan's theft represents mankind as misusing the creative energy. Celestial fire should be conserved to lighten our souls and the souls of others.

There is fire enough within each breast, if the torch is kept up and burning bright, for inspiration and for blessing; fire enough to keep the temple warm and light. The holy embers should not be wasted, but handed on to light new fires for souls yet to be born. We must not confuse the eternal, inspirational fire with earth fire,—that which burns outside the temple. This fire the lame god Hephæstus used well,—his furnace was always ready. This first blacksmith was not only a forger of metals but a most

skilful worker in precious metals. With what marvelous rapidity did he comply with Thetis' request for a new armor for Achilles, and what a wonder of workmanship this armor was! Not only metal makers but potters used this earth-fire well. The potters of Attica became famous for their annual torch-light race,—when they ran all the way from the Ceremicus to the Acropolis to pay tribute to their beloved goddess Athene, who with her own great torch not only lighted the brains of Athen's men of might, but who showed the potters how to bake the clay and taught the women how to cook. If the women of Greece had always taken Athene for a guide in household matters, we should not find Alcestis' sisters cooking old Pelias in Medea's pot. Wisdom would have told them that while ram may be made to seem like lamb by proper boiling; man cannot be made young by any process of stewing. It were well to entertain Athene often in our homes. She will help us to trim the lamps; she will tell us when the kettle boils; she will teach us to weave and spin and do all kinds of beautiful needlework; she will

select the best in literature for us ; she will introduce us to some very famous persons, or better still, some rare souls who worship wisdom. Athene does not care whether we sit on a marble bench, a wicker chair or on the ground when we converse with her, but she does need our torch held high to light the path when she comes to make us a morning or an evening call.

Taking Athene to Walk

“Sprung from the head of Jove, of splendid mein,
Purger of evils, all-victorious queen.”

WE CANNOT always be digging in our garden, nor forever resting in the shady bower ; sometimes we must move about. If for exercise and fresh air we choose a walk and have no earth companion whose step is suited to ours or who enjoys the same tramps, we may always have a good companion.

Often it is said that one may sit at home and converse, in the silence of the study, with the best minds, the high and lofty spirits of the ages. This is true. We may, through books, commune with kings and queens, philosophers and poets, saints and martyrs and seers ;—but one cannot always be reading. That there are powers, as the Albion bard poetically says, which of themselves our minds impress, who feed us in a wise passiveness, we know. This food Wordsworth found by the lakeside, in the fields and meadows, sitting on an old gray stone or on a

country road, "Stepping Westward." We, too, may find it,—whether our face be turned to the rising or the setting sun; towards the Polar Star, or towards Fomalhaut. Whether we are taking a short walk in town or a long excursion into the country, a most delightful companion is the goddess Athene. She will come at our bidding. If we do not know her well enough to invite her for a tramp, let us seek an introduction. Her ancestry matters not: she has made a name for herself. In Egypt, before Isis' day, she was worshipped: a stern, cold, virgin goddess then, not vitally interested in real life. Her worship was brought to Greece by Cecrops (who is no longer deemed a myth). A temple was built to her on a high rock, which in after days became the famed Acropolis of the fair city named for this virgin goddess, whose name ages before had been changed to Athene. This name was given when the myth was woven which proclaimed that wisdom cometh from on high: that wisdom is the feminine part of the godhead. Athene, best beloved daughter of Jove, mothered in his brain, sprang forth full-grown and accoutred for

battle. How men delighted to carve her form in stone and marble, or fashion it in bronze, in gold and in ivory. Of the great festivals held in her honor and the grand processions to celebrate her worship we form some little idea from the exquisite marble frieze of the Parthenon, which temple, builded by loving, skilful, unpaid hands, stands to-day, even in its ruins, an example of architecture for all time—the only perfect temple ever built on earth. The Parthenon makes all other temples seem insignificant and illy proportioned. Yet other fanes were built to honor Athens' goddess, and her statue adorned the frieze or the tympanum of many temples dedicated to other divinities. Still the Attic plains speak to us of Athene and the men of might who worshipped her, while the city that bears her name is rebuilt to-day in glistening marble from Pentelicon. We have not so many works of art, so many beautiful buildings as had the city which Milton calls Mother of Arts; we have not so clear a sky to view the beauties of nature by; nor so much charm in such little space. Greece is a miniature world: every beauty of

nature is there in close communion. In our own dear land we have valleys as green, hills as blue, mountains snow-capped, as fair isles and seas; lakes rivers and waterfalls of far greater magnitude; but the distances are so great we cannot see them all at a glance;—we need to travel far and wide to become familiar with the beauties of nature in our country. Yet, whether we travel a little or a long way, it is equally desirable to take Athene with us. She is not only the Goddess of Wisdom who will help to enlighten our minds and teach us useful lessons from the little as well as the great things of life, but she is queen of the air; her robe is of ether woven by her own hands; so when she is by our side we feel bouyant; our step grows lighter; our feet scarcely touch the ground; our tread is elastic; we feel almost as if we were walking on air. We shall not only tread lightly, we shall breath deeply, till the habit of deep, rhythmic breathing becomes automatic. Also we shall hold the chest high and fully expanded. We note what a curious medallion Athene wears upon her breast. We shall borrow it sometimes

and wear it, for it will make us glad when we look at it to think how many forms of ignorance, how much of prejudice, what a quantity of dark clouds, have been dispelled by Wisdom.

The Gorgon is dead! Her wail, when dying, Athene has woven into music.* Now the goddess wears this head upon her breast as a symbol of power. It shows that evil, ignorance, darkness, dread, may all be turned to good account when illumined by wisdom. This clasp we may wear, remembering that we too have some part to play in the work of dispelling clouds still surrounding many of our sisters. The Gorgon's head will help our friends and frighten our foes.

What is it that the goddess wears about her shoulders that the Gorgon's head rests upon? It is the ægis of Zeus: that wonderful shield which the strong arm of Apollo could shake at will. Athene is the only goddess who wears the ægis. We shall also know it is she when we see the goat's skin on chest or arm or shield. This mantle was made from the skin of the goat that nourished Zeus when he was a babe. Its hundred

* XII Pythian Ode, Pindar.

golden tassels are the lightning which the father of gods and men, the great Cloud Compellor, has added to the shield. That the lightning, once believed to be only a malign force, now is used by all, tells us that Wisdom walks the earth as well as flies in the sky. And we may borrow the shinning ægis, with its fringe of golden tassels. If we make Athene our boon companion she will gladly loan it to us. How safe we feel with this impregnable skin about our shoulders; neither heat nor cold, nor arrows nor microbes can now molest us. The golden tassels fall over our arms and give us power. How easily now we could conquer our foes,—but we seem to have none. For wearing the ægis betokens that we are favorite children of the heavenly King,—ones sent to help the less fortunate or younger brothers and sisters; who when they see the golden tassels will be attracted to our side and feel protected.

But our heads must not be turned down, even to picture the ægis or the Medusa, on our chest. We must walk with head erect, remembering that Athene wears a helmet. This we shall need for balance while we are walking on air. The

head must not grow light, no matter how rapid or springing the movement of our feet. The head must not go too far back—that gives the idea of hauteur. With the helmet of Athene on we need to stand erect, to have exact poise. Let the tip of the ear be just over the shoulder, then the top of the shoulder on a straight line with the hip, which line should end just where the ball of the foot touches the ground. Now we can take a godlike pace, with no fear of the helmet falling off. Our arms may feel like flying off at a tangent, so that we are inclined to swing them. If we are bounding over a field, this does not matter; but if we are walking in town where we need to be more decorous, we may ask Athene for her pole. Not the big one with the bronze spear on top with which she goes to battle, but the smaller one, made from her own favorite olive tree. This is not heavy, it will not only be a good balance, there may be just a suggestion of a bud on top, which will speak to us of victory and of peace.

If we have Athene by our side we shall be at peace with ourselves, with the world, and with God. Every obstacle will be overcome, every fear removed, when we make a practice of taking Athene to walk.

Our Element

Who walketh upon the wings of the wind ;
Who maketh his angels spirits ;
His ministers a flaming fire.

THE ancients spoke of four elements, and were more nearly right than we are with our seventy-four or more. For while air, fire, and water each contain three and earth has nine of the real elements, when speaking poetically we still use the term element for these four most important forms of matter. The astrologer divides the year into triplicities : giving three months to the earth people ; three to the fire folk ; three to the water babes ; and three to children of the air. We are said to belong to one or the other of these triplicities, according to the month in which we made our appearance on this planet : for instance, those born under Libra, Aquarius, or Gemini are of the air ; those under Aries, Sagittarius or Leo will be more attracted by fire than by air ; touch will be less developed in fire people than sight. Children born under Virgo, Capri-

cornus or Taurus need earth: they like to go barefooted and to sit on the ground. Those coming under Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces take most readily to water.

In oriental lore the so-called elements represent the points of the compass, also one of the physical senses;—thus:

Earth, the North, is smell;

Water, the South, is taste;

Fire, the East, is sight;

Air, the West, is touch.

The frozen North, with its spire-like icicles pointing downwards, while they cling to earth, brings the scent of the overworld.

The limpid, liquid South, which, mirror-like, reflects the North, tastes the fragrance as it melts overhead.

The East, with its hope of another day, its light and its fire which bestows so many useful arts on man, well stands for sight.

The air is the widening West, as yet unexplored, giving promise of that to come,—the touch of wisdom trying to awaken dead matter. The air is necessary to water, to earth, and to

fire. It fans the flame. There could be no light, no fire, without the air. When the air moves more swiftly than usual it produces sound, —that wonderful breaker of the silence. Sound is the voice of God in the garden. The Apostle tells us that He maketh the wind His messenger. The Psalmist declares, He rideth on the storm. Pythagoras says to his pupils, "The wind blowing adore the sound." The wind represents wisdom, and we should love the similitude of divine essences. We should listen for the message of the air ; when it is very, very, still it speaks to us of the mighty power of silence ; telling us how great is the Creator, who works such marvels without a sound. It tells us that sound is the breaking of that wonderful wave of silence. When the air is stirring very gently, fanning the butterflies' wings, drinking the dew upon the rose's leaves, so quiet perhaps that on our cheek we cannot say which way it blows ; yet a moistened finger held up will feel the cool and know which way the air is moving. Some pains it takes to discern wisdom's ways in the microscopic things of nature. Often the breeze

comes rustling through the trees, making the leaves sing; each tree produces a different tune; and if we listen attentively the song will tell us something. Then we shall not wonder that oracles arose in groves and that some men and women were wise enough to gain beautiful and timely lessons from the voice they heard in the oaks, or pines, or laurel trees. The listening sent them inside; adoring the sound, sent them out again. This going in and out put their souls in such harmonious rhythm that the messenger's voice was audible. At times the mighty wind becomes boisterous, it shakes the trees; those that are still young and flexible it bends almost to the ground. It chases the leaves about the lawn; it chases the clouds along the sky; it ruffles our hair; it lifts our hat. It is no longer a gentle zephyr kissing the cheek, bidding us listen to a soft whisper. The rapid play of the air makes it difficult to listen now, for sound waves are slow; but we may feel its message as it sweeps the sky and earth and clears the atmosphere.

Just as the breath in our lungs will sometimes sing and sometimes wail; will shout for joy or

thunder with anger; this breath, which, rightly controlled, gives life and health and happiness, and when not controlled often riots and gets on a strike and makes us ill;—so the wind, the gentle spring-like zephyr; the mild, sweet summer breeze; the autumn; clearing storm, is so sharp and biting in winter time, as it comes over the frozen ground, that we forget to listen or to adore the sound.*

There are times when the wind seems to lose all control, coming in every direction, it tears up trees, blows down houses, makes fearful havoc, even wrecking human lives. In a hurricane or cyclone the sense of fear takes the place of the sense of worship. We no longer listen, we stand and dread or run and hide our heads. The wind is still His messenger, though we have lost the power to listen to the message for a time. Yet sooner or later we shall see the work of His strong arm in the devastation of the plain, the destruction of forest and of human habitations; yes, even in the loss of life on land and sea, through the power of the wind,—for He rides upon the storm!

* St. John iii, 8.

Meditation

Thy testimonies are my meditations.

WHILE working in our garden or sitting in our bower we shall often find a few moments for meditation. It is well to set aside a time each day,—early in the morning, at noontide, or at night,—for this helpful exercise.

Many persons who indulge in day-dreams imagine that they are meditating. Others, who know that dreams are usually too indefinite to take the place of meditation, will perchance try so hard to bring their minds to bear on a subject, that they concentrate rather than meditate. While the habit of concentration will always be an aid to meditation, the reverse is not true. There are those of a contemplative mind much given to meditation who never for one whole minute have concentrated. Do we fully understand these two methods of mental development?

To meditate means to think upon. We may take any subject, not necessarily a religious one,

but preferably a serious subject ; though not one to worry about.

If we desire a restful meditation it is always safe to take nature. "Let's talk about the weather," means that you and I who may differ in religion, politics, and philosophy, usually find a common meeting-ground in admiring a sunny sky or abusing a cloudy one. Many minds that find no resting point in religious meditations, that tire with philosophic speculations, when communing with Dame Nature, meet with soothing subjects to dwell upon: find plenty of food for thought, each soul getting its own aliment from such excursions.

One man, meditating on the stars, sees the Great Original behind the orbs of heaven ; another man sees only law and order. Some search beyond the known and seek new suns or new instruments by which to determine the substance of the planets and stars.

One, meditating on water, finds a way of separating it into its elements ; another writes a poem ; a third hears a melody. Every day new creations come from meditating on the earth. A

rose, a lilly, or a daisy, means botany to one man; to another poetry. The individual takes the food he needs from Nature's lavish hand. We should not always meditate upon an object. We may take an idea and thereby unravel more of philosophic truth or perhaps invent a new object. The man who first meditated on the sun and drew a circle on a stone, as a symbol of his sun-god, gave us the letter O. The man who meditated on the movement of the sun and put that thought into form, gave us the wheel. One who meditated on the crescent moon, as it sailed in and out of the clouds, and cut a piece of wood of like shape, gave us a boat. The moon to him was a sky-skiff!

The poet, meditating on the perfection of nature, found that the lily was fair enough without paint, that the rose needed no new perfume, the rainbow no added tint. Another poet, meditating on a field of waving daffodils, gave to the imaging faculty a fadeless picture.

The meditative man has given us wonderful word-pictures, marvelous inventions; much food for philosophic thought and deep religious feeling.

There are manifold things upon which we may meditate to our profit. If our faculties are not sufficiently alert or well enough trained to gain fresh food by thinking on nature, we should aid this defect by reading carefully or committing to memory something a seer has seen and recorded. Gray's *Elegy* is full of word-pictures and every line is perfect. A poet of our own day gives us a picture of plowing, with many helpful suggestions. One is that the eye be fixed upon a point to ensure the furrows being straight. The point the eye is fixed upon represents purpose. Before we can cultivate our nature so as to make straight furrows we must have purpose in life, and be able to say with St. Paul,—this one thing I do. Have we a fixed purpose? Do we know what God's purpose is for us? Are we yearning to know? Do we meditate deeply on this subject? If so we shall soon find out what we are here for,—what is purposed for us to do.

When in a dilemma as to a duty, when anxious, or uncertain, or careworn, or unhappy, one of the very best methods of finding a smooth

path is to meditate, not upon the subject that is troubling us,—for if we keep thinking of a matter that worries we often get more and more perplexed,—but by taking the mind wholly off an unhappy theme we find rest and give the light a chance to break through the cloud. As one nail drives out another, so one thought can displace another. As the way to drive out dark, is not to fret about it, but make a light ; so the way to drive away dark and troublesome thoughts is to light the lamp of our mind by dwelling on some wise saying. There are illumining texts of scripture in the literatures of all lands. Each one of the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount is worthy many hours of meditation. Very many of the Psalms are profitable themes for such exercise. If when reading we do not readily find words that sufficiently arrest our attention we may resort to help from a saint, or seer, or prophet, who has gleaned for us. Some find in Thomas à Kempis what they fail to gain from the Bible. Others gain from Socrates or Marcus Aurelius or Swedenborg or Sir Thomas Browne what they need for food for thought.

When the sunlight blinds us we should resort to the shade. Some persons prefer lamp light to read by, others read best by electric light. We need not, however, despise candle light, even if we have arc lights.

We are bidden to take of the Water of Life freely, we are not told that any one fountain or pool or stream contains all the good. Inspiration is not limited to the Castalian Spring; health to the pool of Bethesda; nor baptism to the river Jordan. Though told that Life is more than meat, we are not forbidden to partake of flesh;* not required to become ascetics or anchorites.

Adeptship is not promised to the few who abstain from all pleasures; but radiant life is promised to those who live under the law of love.

Let us meditate upon the words of many teachers; but let us obey only the teachings of the Master Seers: they never differ, save in the way of presenting truth.

* Timothy iv, 3.

The Healing of the Nations

To him that overcometh will I give to eat
of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the
paradise of God.

PROBABLY there is no book in the world, of like length, that contains so much esoteric teaching, so much hidden lore, as the Revelation of St. John the Divine. A great deal of the teaching is purposely obscure, that we may have to dig for the treasure and that the meaning may not be found by those who are not ready for such strong food, such deep truths. Some passages in this wonderful book yeild their message through meditation; others require concentration and prayer and repeated readings before their meaning is clear. Where the seer is recounting the rewards awaiting those who have overcome, we find the promise to give power over the nations (our bodily parts). The rod of iron which we are told shall rule these nations is our will. To keep the will always at work, to be forever willing the right and not the wrong

is a most difficult task ; and so it is that the nations are often at war : that anarchy exists instead of righteous rule among our members. Hence it is that the lord of all the nations of the earth,—the self,—suffers. It is a blessed thing to know that besides the rod of iron, by which we are to rule ourselves, there are other helps : that there are ways and means of healing the wounded ; of restoring the downtrodden powers.

There is a tree growing in the midst of the garden, we are told, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The leaves that grow upon this mystical tree are the fruits of the spirit : Love, Joy, and Peace are on the topmost branches. We are continually reaching out for these most desirable leaves, forgetting that the lower limbs of the tree must first be surmounted.

One of the leaves lower down, and the first we should use, is Temperance,—physical, mental and spiritual temperance. We certainly know what physical temperance is—not total abstinence from anything good, but a regulated body. Mental temperance includes tolerance;—spiritual

temperence eschews fanaticism and exercises self-control in prayer, avoiding vain repetitions.

The second leaf we need is Meekness. Perchance we have been too high and mighty; too self-important. If we have thought we could rule others without first having ruled ourselves, we have lacked one of the qualities most necessary to the subduing of the nations.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Let us bow our proud heads and bend our stiff wills for a few moments each day to the Lord of all the worlds and learn from Him lowliness of spirit.

The third leaf, in order upwards, is Faith. Having put our will in harmony with the higher will, we easily reach the branch on which the leaf of faith is growing. It is not readily plucked. We handle it; we see its beauty; its strength; daily it grows more desirable in our eyes; but it takes an effort to make it ours. When once we possess it—then it seems like a great rock to sit upon, like a great cloud to shelter us from too much light.

Yes, it is a bed to lie upon ; it is a field fair, fertile, full of grain : it is an arm to lean upon ; a hand to lead us on. O Faith, fair, fair Faith, thou dost dispel all doubt of the Omnipotent One ; all distrust of His goodness, His justice, His wisdom, His truth.

Next we find two little leaves growing close together. We take one in either hand. Their names are Gentleness and Goodness : two god-like qualities. These are easy to pluck when our faith in God and man is firm.

Now we see a long, strong leaf for which we need take a wearisome climb. Longsuffering is its name. This leaf no one at first desires. "How can it play any part in healing me," we cry, and would turn back, but that our feet, now planted on the stem where Faith's leaf grows are rooted here, while our heads are lifted up so that we see wherefrom Peace and Joy proceed and know the only way to gather these most desirable leaves is by climbing on the stem of Longsuffering.

It is the law of creation that none may escape. Light is even born of dark. The night proceeds

the day ; grief is of the night, but joy comes in the morning.

When the eighth leaf lies in our lap we smile, for Peace is now at hand. Our long suffering seems but a dream : we are sitting on the shore of the boundless sea ; the light which doth from glory proceed is shed upon our path. We are now conscious of the truth that the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. Seeing the reflection of real light we think of that verse: And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in light of it. The light not only dwells in our heart, as it does in the heart of every one of God's children, but the life more abundant is now throbbing in our pulse, urging us on to higher goals, bidding us spread the good news. Shout the glad tidings, exultantly sing as we climb to the topmost branch where Love grows. We wave to those below to rise from the rocks and climb the tree. We take hold of the liferope and try to see how many souls we can help to find the way to the shore of peace ; to the hill of joy ; to the haven of love.

Concentration

“The throne of the soul is there, where interior and exterior worlds fuse. There is fusion at every point at which they interpenetrate.”

MEDITATION may or may not be an aid to concentration; but concentration will not only help in meditation, it is necessary to any serious study. Every child should be taught to concentrate, otherwise how expect proper attention? Without the ability to attend with eye and ear, much will be lost or acquired very slowly and with difficulty that could be learned quickly and easily if the habit of concentration has been formed.

In our schools, and even with private tutorship, the child is usually thrust into arithmetic,—expected to concentrate on a whole row of figures without first having been taught any of the elements of concentration. Is it any wonder that half of the children say, “I hate arithmetic”? They would not, if it were made attractive to them and their tender minds were

drilled in concentration by means that attracted attention. It is more difficult to concentrate on a pinhead than on a sunset. It taxes the brain more to give attention to figures than to pictorial symbols. We are usually careful about the child's limbs, letting it creep ere it walks; not lifting it by its arms; not expecting it to carry heavy weights. But of the mind how cruelly careless we often are, insisting upon attention to minute matters before exercise has been taken on the larger sense-objects.

While interior concentration is what we most need and must ultimately strive for, it is well to begin with the exterior; best at first to take large objects as easier and more restful to the mind; if we happen to be near water, the line of the horizon, rather than the waves at our feet. We should learn to look out, to gain distance. Sitting on the sand by the lake or sea we may not only watch the horizon intently, but for a change may take a distant sail. We should not try to determine what kind of a craft it is that holds that sail or who is in the boat; we are not now thinking about objects, just looking at them

intently. Watch the sail till it is lost to sight, shutting out all other sights, and, if possible, all thoughts; for we are not meditating upon the sailboat, we are trying to concentrate upon it;—and concentration is to bring all our thoughts to a centre: fix our entire attention on an object or a sound.

If we are in the mountains, it is well at first to take the furthestmost peak. It is likely to be blue,—which color is especially good for the eyes to rest upon; and if distant enough, no minor objects, such as trees or rocks, will suggest thoughts to change the concentration into meditation.

If in the forest, take a tree or a distant clump of trees—or the top of a tree against the sky; later we may take a single leaf, or bud, or flower, but large objects at first are easier to hold the mind. Whatever the place or object we should gaze without interruption, without letting the thoughts rove for a few minutes.

If on the prairies or near an open bit of country, take the line of light which is so often rosy at morn or eve, hold it in your vision and note

only its fading. If we live in a crowded place and have no good sky-view, yet we may find one tree whose top seems to meet the sky, as did our English poet who wrote :

“I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high.—
It seemed as if their slender tops
Were close against the sky.”

At night we may observe the moon or one of the planets, a brilliant star, a white cloud, or a distant light-house. Out-of-doors concentration is always helpful. It will imprint beautiful pictures on the brain which we may recall at will. Should it be our misfortune to be indoors most of our days it is well to have at least one beautiful object in the room where most of our time is spent. It is almost better to have nothing than to have too many things. How could anyone concentrate in a curio-shop, a bazaar or a second-hand store? Yet many of our modern living-rooms are such places. A collection of heterogeneous objects is very disquieting and detrimental to a pacific mental mood.

It is well to have one room in our earth castle,

no matter how tiny, free from objects that distract the mind. If we have no room exclusively our own, a curtained corner will do for meditation; and if the walls are plain, and not more than one object to attract attention, the corner will do for concentration. We know those who have not even a corner for their very own. They may have a closet, and to the inside of the closet door a sheet of white paper may be pinned on which a blue or green disc has been glued,—a piece of blotting paper the size of a silver dollar. If your eyes are perfectly normal, light blue is the most pleasing to gaze at steadily. If you are far-sighted, a medium blue is better,—the shade most agreeable to the eyes will tell how far-sighted you are, and using the right shade helps to restore the sight. We should take a low chair or cushion so that both feet may reach the floor (not crossed), though if liked we may sit on the floor Buddha-fashion—the hands resting on the thighs, palms down. We should look at the spot on the paper for from one to five minutes, at a distance of from three to four feet. If we get too near it may cause a dizzy feeling. Do

this exercise twice daily,—thinking of nothing for the time ; shut out all mental images, all sound, if possible ; just look at the spot. If after repeated trials it is still difficult to concentrate, it is well to change the position of the hands. Let the right thumb gently press the left palm, relaxing the rest of the hands ; preserve a steady firm pressure of the thumb. This tends to increase will power.

Someone will ask : “What can I possibly gain by looking at a spot that tells me nothing? It is because it tells no tale of joy or woe, suggests nothing special to our mind, that it helps us to concentrate. Learning to look at this small spot of color on a white background is much the same exercise to the brain as learning to hold pen, pencil, or charcoal is to our hand. Our instrument needs training, if it is to do our work for us.

The Hindoos have an exercise for concentration, which is to look at the end of the nose and at nothing else for an indefinite period. This is rather hard on the eyes, but there is no objection to trying it for a few seconds. These chil-

dren of India, wise in many things, we have not yet learned, teach a number of exercises to control the breath.

The habit of breath-control tends to control the mind. Some persons find it helpful to hold the breath for a moment before concentrating; others find it better to take a very deep breath, which helps to steady the mind. This will usually relieve a timid person from fear.

These exercises for breath-control, explained at much length in some of the theosophical books, are called *Raga-yoga*.

There is also the exercise of repeating a word or a syllable rhythmically. This they call *Mantra-yoga*. It is supposed to quiet the thought—for it tends towards sleepiness. This may be the form of prayer referred to by Jesus when he says: Make not vain repetitions as the heathen do. While of some value as an exercise, it is hardly efficacious as prayer.

The third form of concentration recommended by the Hindoo teachers is that of bringing the mind to bear upon one idea,—all forms of concentration lead up to this ultimately.

But to return to our disc. If looking at it steadily pains the eyes, the color is too light, or there is some astigmatism. If looking at the disc makes one dizzy, then we are either setting too near or gazing too long at a time. We should then rest for a day or two and try again, sitting a little farther away. Those who cannot use the disc are sometimes helped by using a tumbler half full of water to gaze into. If one begins to see many things in the glass, then desist, for it may become as fruitful as crystal gazing, which is not well for everybody and may develop something quite the reverse of concentration.

When we can, without great effort or any bad feelings, concentrate for from three to five minutes on any exterior object we are ready for interior concentration, which is higher and more important as a factor in our mental development.

The first exercise is to imagine a spot or circle at the base of the brain, close the eyes and look at it from the inside. The next thing is to imagine any simple figure,—a point, circle, triangle, cube, or vase ; close the eyes and see this figure of our own making just behind the forehead, be-

tween the eyes. Be very careful at first to only use the steady gaze inward for a few seconds, otherwise we tire the eyes. This exercise may be varied by concentrating, with the eyes closed, on any imaginary object until it is quite clear. A simple and pleasant example is a large red rose: see it; then take it in your hand, smell of it, let the color and odor seem real to your senses until you are immersed in the color and the fragrance. This is very restful.

When we have learned to concentrate easily on either exterior or interior objects, being able to hold the mind to a given point without permitting it to run off on any side-track, then we may take a subject or an idea, having now our minds under some control, we shall be able to hold the thought to the question we wish to solve or the idea we desire to expand. Whatever we wish to be,—writer, inventor, extemporary speaker,—the practice of concentration on an idea will be helpful; for it will clarify the perception, enlarge the imagination, and strengthen the will.

Creative Concentration

“Whatsoever thing is potent, prosperous, or forceful, know that this same springs from a portion of my splendour.”

AN EXCELLENT exercise in Creative Concentration is to make a plant grow. Rudolph Steiner in his *Way of Initiation* advises the student to experiment on a seed of a familiar plant,—preferably a vine,—say a morning-glory. Lay the seed in the palm of the hand; gaze at it steadily. See the root come out and grow down. Then see the stem arise, follow it in your mind's eye till the vine has attained its normal height. See it put forth leaves and buds, going slowly, step by step, till it blossoms. Now see the blossom fade, the vine gradually wither and die down to the ground. It is asserted that if you repeat this exercise daily for a time you will be able to see the astral of the plant, and in this way, by much practice, you will learn to see other astrals.

Another exercise that has been beneficial is to begin with a common earthen flower-pot. Close

your eyes, if you choose. See the pot on the floor directly in front of you. Fill it with rich black earth (still only in your imagination), firmly plant a shoot of ivy, a bulb or sprig of a rose tree. See it take root ; then let the stem grow. Let the leaves slowly unfold one by one. Later have a single flower appear, a lily or a rose. After some practice of this kind you may test your creative ability, doing this exercise in the presence of a few friends to find out if you can make another person see the same thing you have imaged. Preferably have about nine to twelve persons present ; of that number two or three will be able to see your plant, if your will is strong and your image clear to yourself. In an audience of forty or fifty probably not more than six or eight persons will see your creation. Some may see it slightly different; showing that they are themselves creating images. This exercise is a wonderful lesson ; for it brings the fact home to us that thought is creative and tells us that all our thoughts, whether we will them or not, are forming images. We see how advisable it is to control the current of our thought,

so that the creations we are making in the astral world may be pleasant to look upon. We are hourly writing in the Book of Life, though we do not always see what we are writing. If it happens that our life is too mental, that we are workers in any field requiring excessive concentration, as a teacher of mathematics, a banker, a lawyer, or a preacher, then we need rest for the brain, and if the required rest is denied us in the form of out-of-door sports,—boating, swimming, sailing, climbing, digging, golfing and the like. If we have no prattling children, no singing birds, no blooming plants or charming music to rest or to soothe our weary brain, there is a very simple exercise we may use. The homeopathist has a saying that like cures like. Yes, one nail drives out another. So when weary from too much concentration we may rest by concentrating,—only on something very different than that which has caused our fatigue. Some persons find refreshment by imaging the odor of flowers or spices,—in the sensuous gratification, forgetting time and place. If troublesome thoughts persist, or tiresome repetitions, or the

brain is greatly fatigued, it is the best plan to take the thought-current right to the heart. You cannot think in your heart; the brain tires. The heart is a great reservoir of rest. By an action of the will draw the life fluid away from the brain. Slowly but surely concentrate upon the current and try to feel it going down the left side of the head and neck and bring it into the upper chamber of the heart. It touches your spirit there and will rest till you give it leave to go up stairs again. The mind tires with greatness as well as with littleness. The brain is finite, but in the heart you reach the portals of the infinite. The spirit never tires. In close communion with the self the mind realizes its littleness and in awe it will wait for the spirit to speak. It is during these moments of intercourse with our spirit that we learn what we are to do, and after repeated seasons of repose the refreshed mind becomes more and more creative.

Suggestion

Since the roots of our nature are established in divinity, from which also we are produced, we should tenaciously adhere to our roots ; for streams also of water and other offspring of the earth, when their roots are cut off, become rotten and dry.

SUGGESTION is still an experimental science. Much has been written on the subject, and a good deal of light thrown upon the mystery of the workings of the human mind in its hypnotic and semi-trance states, by workers in this field of psychology.

The power of suggestion is well known to the physician, and in the hands of an intelligent, conscientious person it is a power for good. We are still on the outskirts of experiment in this field, having explored scarcely more than the borderland. We may have read Charcot, and Björnson, and Balfour, and believed all they tell us of the marvelous power of suggestion. We may even have seen some cases, or ourselves experienced this power in the hands of a skilful operator, and

yet not realize the enormous significance of these experiments or the truth that they should impress upon us : that the mind in sickness and in health, in youth and in age, is ever taking on impressions. It is being moulded, not only by its environment, taught by what it sees and hears, but greatly influenced for bad or good by the thoughts of those near and far, who try to influence our attitude towards life.

If we understood the power of suggestion, we would all be more careful in the presence of the young, the mentally weak, or the physically ill. Why is it that when our physician comes into the room we feel better? Someone will say, "The confidence I feel that he will help me." Yes, that is good so far. Again we hear, "The taking off the responsibility." Yes, that is a factor towards the help we feel. Another will say, "He is so strong and so cheerful, I feel buoyed up in his presence." If the physician is as intelligent as a man should be to follow that profession, he knows that much depends upon our mental attitude ; therefore he is not only serene and cheerful in his manner, but betrays

no agitation that will lead us to think our case serious. He will put into our mind the idea that we are better, that we shall soon recover. In other words, he not only cheers us with his kindly face and his words of encouragement, but he leaves with us the thought of health. By the power of suggestion, this wise man helps us to realize that we may be well ; and if he has studied the subject of suggestion seriously, not only when present will he give his encouraging thought, but instead of worrying about his patients when absent he will send a strong wave of active good towards them, knowing that thought is potent to travel and to act at a distance. It is a universal wireless. It is of great importance for a physician to be of a sanguine temperament ; an optimist in the highest degree. Suggestion has been used with wonderful success, not only by helping to heal physical ailments, but moral deficiencies.

If we but believed that all we think travels faster than a horse can trot, a motor can roll, or even a telegram can run on the wires, and that one's thoughts act for good or for evil on the

brains of others, we would endeavor to control our thinking apparatus and send forth strong, helpful, happy, healthy thoughts into the world about us.

Understanding the great power of suggestion, we shall be extremely careful of the environment of the very young. When the brain is soft and before it is filled with impressions is the time that it is most important for sweet influences to surround the child. If the unborn babe, as we now think, can be impressed by the mother's thought, surely the growing infant should not be left to foolish, ignorant, thoughtless nurse-maids. Suggestion is often more potent with the young than with the mature person. Children are nearer to the animal state. Just as a horse or a dog is affected, so is a child. Some children are more easily controlled by a strong thought-current than by the spoken word. Especially with an obstinate disposition, a child will often resent a spoken command, but will be influenced by a well-directed thought. Many women rule their husbands in this way. They keep thinking, and thinking confidently, and soon the man sug-

gests what his wife has willed him to, while he never suspects the thought is not his first.

It is no new discovery that the thought-current works at a distance. "Absent treatment" is as old, if not older, than Homer's day. In the *Iliad* we read of wounded Hector helped by Apollo. But even before the healing god appeared, we are told that the will of Zeus reached the wounded hero, enabling him to sit up and stop vomiting blood. Hector had prayed to the All Father that he would send Apollo to his aid, yet before Apollo stood beside him he felt the effect of the strong thought of Zeus. He had put his will in harmony with that of the Father of gods and men. Absent healing is all well and good, but often the patient is near by, and we may use the power of suggestion just as well at home as abroad. The same strain of thought has fretted and worn the brain. Say that it is a woman with many little cares. Sometimes a little friendly chat about a frivolous matter, a jest, a surprise,—something that startles one a little,—will do away with a worry headache. Sometimes this is not

efficacious. Try another method : for example, I visited a friend who had a dreadful pain in her head. Thinking she might be better if she could forget it, she had welcomed a group of young women who were preparing for a ball. They laughed and chatted ; but instead of being benefitted she suffered more and retired to another room and lay on the sofa, her hand to her head. I saw she was willing to be helped, so I sat beside her and said : "Come with me, let us take an air-line for Atlantic City. We can go without even an air-boat—just let us float through the air. Ah! see the sea ; let us sit on the sand, it is so clean and white ; how cool the sea breeze is, see the waves are all white-capped. How many gulls there are,—let us rest each hand on the back of a gull and go out with them to the very end of the waves ; out, out, clear to the horizon !" Long before we had finished the trip,—sooner than I had expected,—my friend sat up, opened her eyes and said : "Why the pain in my head has all gone." She had for a moment forgotten herself.

Auto-Suggestion

“With the radiant lamp of knowledge dissipate the darkness born of ignorance.”

IF ONE mind can affect another at a distance or near at hand; if our environment means so much; if it is true that the thoughts and the feelings of those about us react upon us; how natural it is to believe that we can affect ourselves by our own thought. It has been said that our good thoughts, which are positive, go forth and actively affect others, but that our evil thoughts, which are negative, react and only hurt ourselves. In a sense this is true. Good is more potent than evil, and certainly the evil things that we think are more harmful to us than to others. It is very important that we should be able to control our thoughts before we try to control the actions of others. If we are to be a power in the world we must first regulate ourselves. Before we start to entertain we usually furnish our house. Before we start to lecture, to preach, or to teach, we need to furnish our own minds.

So before we begin to heal others it is better to be in health ourselves.

The thought-currents active in the cerebrum can be used for self-adjustment,—can be impressed upon the cerebellum, which portion of the brain controls the bodily parts. We used to be taught that all the workings of the organs of our body were unconscious. Now we say subconscious. It is true that only one portion of the brain is actively conscious. In many persons but one lobe is used. When both lobes are well developed one can think of two things at a time.

If the repetition of a syllable induces concentration, as the Hindoos teach, certainly the repetition of a thought will produce an effect on our non-thinking parts. Try a very simple experiment. Tell yourself what time you wish to awaken in the morning. Say it decidedly and go to sleep confident that you will awake at the hour named, and you surely will. If we tell ourselves anything many times, or with strong emphasis, we come to believe it. If with firm will we impress upon ourselves the thought that we are well, are kind, are tender, are just, are

helpful ; if we strive never to think anything offensive of ourselves or others ; never to cloud even the horizon of our minds with untruth, with pernicious or fallacious thoughts, but fill our minds with cheerful, happy, wholesome thoughts about God and man, we shall soon feel the effect. Cheerful thought is to the mind what sunshine is to the body. Wholesome thought is like a gentle breeze that dispels the clouds.

Where one thing is another cannot be. If our minds are full of pleasant, peaceful, joyous thoughts, there will be no room for the other kind.

We cannot dispel dark with dark. We cannot fight evil with evil. To take out the dark we must put in light.

We are in doubt,— we feel despondent, dejected, despairing,— there are a lot of words beginning with D that have no place in a healthy mind. There are just as many beginning with L,—better and stronger ones.

Light drives out dark ; Love takes away doubt ; Life overcomes dejection and despondency. How are we to get these three Ls to

take the place of all those deep, dark hells? Open the shutters, raise the curtains, go out into the open. For mental light, read cheerful, helpful books; hear good music; talk to optimistic people. For spiritual light, pray.

Then, love not only everybody in the world, but love God. We say we do,—but do we? If we do love God, we can have no doubts, no despairs. Lastly, we must live; for life overcomes dejection and despondency and discontent. If we are really living, not just existing or luxuriating from day to day, we shall never find time to be despondent. If we feel ourselves getting dull or dejected and the liver is inactive, the way to overcome “the blues” is to do some active good to others. Call on a friend who is in affliction. We can always find someone more dejected than ourselves. We must speak words of cheer; we should give away something (not just old clothes, or books, or furniture that we no longer want ourselves). Do live things; act; live in the fresh air as much as possible. Have flowers about us; give flowers to the sick, to children and to those in affliction.

If our circumstances are such that they do not permit of our giving away anything tangible, we may at least send forth a host of kind thoughts. If we have no plants to tend in our home, we may surely cultivate flowers in the garden of our heart and send them out into the world in the form of kind words, friendly greetings, smiles, good thoughts. Let us never forget that thoughts are very potent.

If we have any enemies or any acquaintances that have maligned us or otherwise treated us badly, we must pray for them. If we obey this command of our Lord to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us, we shall find that those we thought our enemies will become our friends.

Should our own affliction be such that we know of none other so oppressed, to whom we can go with a helpful word, then let us consider the deep sorrow of the Blessed Mother of Jesus. See her standing by the cross and sympathize with her,—for no woman ever bore a greater weight of woe and bore it so bravely. If this does not suffice, think of Him who was nailed

upon the cross,—who freely gave His life for His friends. Derided, despised, spat upon, He prayed for those who persecuted Him!

Should it be that our portion in life contains no friends, flowers, music, pictures, fresh air, or sunshine, still we may talk to God.

Once, when visiting the woman's prison in Indianapolis, I was much impressed by a very old negro woman who, confined in a narrow dingy cell, lay on the floor and sang. I stopped and asked her some questions. She said she was quite content; yes, she was happy. She had a bed and enough to eat and sometimes a kind person to speak with; but, best of all, "de Lord can hear me in dis here cell as well as He could outside."

The warden told me it was the second time the old woman had been "sent up" for stealing a chicken, which she declared she did on purpose so that she could "get took care of for the winter." It seemed to me a novel way of getting one's living. But she was happy, she knew that He who knoweth our necessities before we ask, had forgiven her theft;—even if her brother

man thought it necessary to deprive her of her freedom. The old woman had settled it with God;—so she sang her hymns and was happy.

The blessed privilege of confiding in the Heavenly Father belongs to all His children; though all do not avail themselves of this chance for happiness. We read constantly in the Old Testament of men who talked with God. Every creature should enjoy talking to his Creator direct and without the intervention of another. We say we are the children of God,—but do we believe this precious truth?

In the practice of auto-suggestion, a thought that should be impressed by the thinking mind upon the subconscious mind,—the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night,—is the nearness of God to His offspring,—the love of God for His own.

It may be necessary at first to have words to make the thought clear to the mind. Here are a few forms to say aloud, then to think :

I am a child of God ;
He made me ; He does love me ;
He will care for me ; He understands me.
I will call upon Him !

I am a child of the Heavenly King ;
I am an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven ;*
The Kingdom of Heaven is within me !

I am a child of the Most High ;
There is a part of infinite substance within me ;
 I will evoke it !
It is light ; it is love ; it is life ;
I will fan the flame until I am burning
 with love for God.

I will arise and go to my Father ;
I will lift up the gate of my garden wall
 and bid the King to come in.
I can rest in the knowledge of His love.

* Rev. xxi, 7.

The Garden Gates

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye
lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of
glory shall come in.

Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and
thy gates Praise.

Have the gates of death been opened unto
thee ? or hast thou seen the doors of the
shadow of death ?

AS THERE are twelve gates to the city over there, the New Jerusalem, there should be twelve gates to the city here,—the one builded by the pattern that is above. We hear the body of man referred to as a temple, a tabernacle, an earth house, a robe of clay, a shroud, a plot of ground, the dust of the earth, a garden, a city. Some of the seers of India liken the earth body to a city with nine gates,—others give it ten gates. If we think far enough we shall see that it has twelve gates. All here below is but a reflection of what is above. Our bodies are in minature very like the great city over yonder.

The mental picture of a city makes us think of many persons, of riots and noises, and strange vibrations, that wear upon the nerves. Our body has within it many riots, many murders, much noise and confusion and very many strange vibrations. It is more than a city ; it is nearly a world ! The microcosm is a minute reflection of the macrocosm. Yet the body itself is neither a city nor a world. A city or a world uninhabited is no more than a plot of ground. So when we look at our body as something distinct from the self a habitation for the soul, then a garden is perhaps a better picture to bring before our mind than a city. We have thought of the portion of earth allotted to us for soul-culture as a garden. We have thought of a wall surrounding our cultivated field. We know that there are gates in the wall. What are these gates and what is their use ? To the north are seven gates, well known to us : two to look forth from ; two to admit sounds of the outer world ; two from which to gain the fragrance of the air ; one where the breeze best blows, where we take in food and give out sound in the form of song

or of spoken words. These seven gates are very precious to us,—we dislike to have even one of them out of order. Only when one gets rusty and will not open do we realize just how much we depend upon these gates for our pleasure in life. To the south are three gates. To these we rarely give the attention that we should. Sometimes these gates squeak on their hinges, or open and shut with difficulty, as the waste from the garden is carried forth. It is well to clean out the back-yard at intervals, not let the garbage-can get too full; else we may find it necessary to call in a mechanic to mend the south gates. One of these three gates is not for daily use. It should be locked except on festival occasions. It should be carefully guarded and only opened to one who can give the countersign.

A secret gate there is higher in the wall than any of the ten. It is narrow and more difficult of egress. It was spoken of by the ancient seers only to the initiates. The Lord Jesus alludes to it in the Sermon on the Mount, saying that it leads to life;* then adds, few there be that find

* St. Mathew vii, 13, 14.

it. It was the illumination of this eleventh gate which, on the day of Pentecost, gave such eloquence to the disciples of the Nazarene, so that they spoke in strange tongues. These men had for forty days prayed that they might receive this illumination. They had prepared their hearts, had placed a sacrifice upon the golden altar.* The spirit made ready by sorrow had lighted the fire ; so the flame ascended and came forth from the narrow gate ; then the angel guide took the fire and cast it back to the earth. In other words, these men of Galilee gave their whole hearts to God ; they offered their spirits in all humility, and with great desire for realization, to their Creator, and God sent one of his messengers, who are flames of fire, to light their acceptable sacrifice. When the flame arose so that the angel saw the sincerity of their desire to give all, then nothing was taken. The casting of the fire down to earth means returning it to the body ; so that the earth part of man may be vivified and purified by this baptism of fire. This the angel guide will ever do for the sincere and zeal-

* Rev. x, 5.

ous soul. This cleansing by the fire of the spirit is as necessary to the internal man as bathing in water is to the external man.

Blessed are they that do His Commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

What of the twelfth gate of this dear garden of ours? It is found within our shady bower and opens out. Just now it is a window, one from which, most likely, we have never looked forth. Perhaps the blinds are shut, the curtains closely drawn. It may be the vines have overgrown it, so that it does not even admit light, or look like a window to us. Some day a visitor will arrive, and stand outside that gate, for whom we shall need to open it. It were well to draw the curtains aside, to trim the vines, and occasionally to glance out of this aperture; so that we shall not be too startled when the messenger appears, who will surely come, some day, to lead us forth. He may tap gently; may come with a stealthy step and low rap; or he may come in haste with a heavy stride and a loud knock.

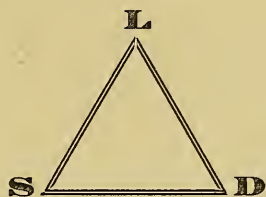
Whenever and however he comes, we must unbar the gate,—not to let him in,—he comes not to abide; his is an errand of a different kind. He comes to summon us to a great feast. He will lead us into new pastures, besides the still waters and bid us drink of the Fountain of Life and partake of the fruit of the Tree which bears every month.*

The twelfth gate does not open into our garden; it opens outward into fresh fields; where we shall find new work to do; and where we shall be exceedingly joyful, if we are ready for the journey. From the twelfth gate we go out but once; it closes behind us and we cannot return. Nor shall we look back regretfully to our shady bower when once out in the great world beyond.

“When all the knobs of the heart are untied the mortal becomes immortal.”²

That they might be called trees of righteousness; the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

* Rev. xxii, 2.



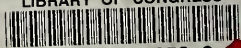
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